

## Community Based Learning and Social Studies at Scavo High School in Des Moines

Des Moines Public Schools' Scavo High School instructors Carl Stamey and Steve Peters are trying a new approach to teaching social studies through community based learning. The class meets at the State Historical Building all day on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

At Scavo community-based learning is defined as the broad set of teaching/learning strategies that enable youth and adults to learn what they want to learn from any segment of the community. The definition provides for learners of all ages to identify what they wish to learn and opens up an unlimited set of resources to support them. "Community" includes the schools, formal and informal institutions in a neighborhood, and the entire world—through such resources as the Internet. Principles of community-based learning relate to the changing nature of society, the learner, the learning processes, and sources for learning. The two educators at Scavo developed a rubric designed from the new Iowa Core Curriculum in social studies and life skills to ensure the class knew what they were learning.

Students in Scavo's Social Science Community Based Learning class have spent over 70 hours out in the Des Moines community studying history, government, and contemporary world issues. During a reflection moment, one of the students in the class summed it up best: *"In my community experience, I went from learning what something is, to applying it to real life. I learned why I need to know the things that I learned in class. I had a chance to work with some neat people who let me try out things for myself. The instructors really seemed to care about me as a person and we had fun learning."*

Students conducted primary source interviews with former shipmates who served on the **USS Iowa**. These former sailors were visiting Des Moines as part of their annual convention and were touring a **USS Iowa** exhibit at the State Historical Museum. Students got a first-hand account of each crew member's stay on the ship and were able to interview them for 5 -10 minutes. Each had a unique story and students commented on their bravery and pride in serving during the **Iowa's** commission. The interviews were put into a multimedia display and were sent to the men upon completion.

Students in the class also served as guides for Des Moines area principals during their retreat at the Historical building. These students took principals to workshops and made sure they kept on schedule.

Several of the students volunteered during the George Washington Carver Day in September assisting visitors with crafts and games. Students also created visual displays of the entire exhibit and presented their work to other students and teachers.

The students also toured the State Capitol and made presentations. Students became familiar with the history of the Capitol, studied the Legislature, and discussed the curriculum they had used for the Iowa Caucus Exhibit at the State Historical Building. Some students met Secretary of State Michael Mauro while working on the exhibits at the Capitol.

The first class of students concluded their community experience by acting as docents for one of the exhibits at the Historical building. Included in this tour group were four Scavo staff, State Historical Museum Events Coordinator Maureen Korte, and Education Director Sarah Macht.

The second class got off to an intense start by leading over 1,000 elementary and middle school students as they participated in the "Let's Celebrate Archeology" program as part of the "History through the Arts" program at the Historical Building. Their leadership skills will be put to the test again later in the school year as they lead workshops related to the play "Heroine of the Bridge," the Kate Shelley story, the second segment of "History through the Arts."

Valuable experiential learning was realized by everyone with a George Washington Carver quote from the exhibit one of the students discovered: "a large proportion of every true student's work must be outside the classroom."